

long rod tilts downward into the center of the cooking pot in order to ensure the spatula does not spread vegetables, meat and ingredients out of the cooking pot.

5 19. The automatic cooking and vending machine as recited in claim 17, wherein the bottom of the housing has a plurality of ventilation windows extending fully therethrough, for allowing air to enter the interior of the housing.

10 20. A method of preparing, dispensing, and vending a plate of cooked food to a customer, using an automatic cooking and vending machine having a housing having a platform and an access door, said housing enclosing two gas burners, a water sprinkler, a motorized tracking mechanism having two pots

15 each having an associated stirrer assembly attached thereunto, a plate dispensing assembly having a cylindrical plate compartment for holding a plurality of empty plates, and having a plate dispensing mechanism, and a computer having an associated touch screen for selectively displaying

20 a menu having a plurality of different cooked foods, said computer also having a credit card scanning slot, said computer for controlling each of the components of the machine, said automatic cooking and vending machine having a food storage compartment which is supported upon the

25 platform, and a plurality of different food storage

containers contained within the food storage compartment, wherein the machine has a rotatable gear wheel interposed between the food storage compartment and the platform, wherein the gear wheel selectively rotates under the

5 direction of the computer, wherein the gear wheel has a top surface, a bottom surface, openings extending fully from the top surface to the bottom surface, and an attached quantity measuring device under the control of the computer, a plurality of conveyor tubes extending from the bottom

10 surface of the gear wheel, for directing food from the food storage containers into the cooking pot selectively positioned between the burners, said conveyor tubes having a bottom having a shutter, said method comprising the steps of:

15 placing an order for a plate of cooked food by inserting a credit card into the credit card scanning slot, and by using the touch screen of the computer to request a particular plate of cooked food from the menu;

20 automatically deducting the cost of the food from the credit card by the computer;

25 directing the tracking mechanism by the computer to position a pot between the burners;

directing the gear wheel by the computer to rotate to a position wherein an appropriate opening of the gear wheel is positioned below an appropriate food container;

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measuring with the quantity measuring device the requisite quantities of food from the food containers, under the direction of the computer;

10 opening the shutters at the bottom of the conveyor tubes to release said quantities of food into the cooking pot;

15 activating the gas burners to cook the food within the pot;

stirring the food within the pot with the stirrer assembly as it is cooking;

20 positioning an empty plate underneath the cooking pot by the plate dispenser mechanism, for accepting the cooked food thereupon after the food has been cooked;

25 moving the plate out of the access door by the plate dispenser mechanism for receipt by the customer;

moving, with the tracking mechanism, the pot which has been used for cooking to an inverted position above the sprinkler, where it is washed subsequent to being used once 5 again for cooking; and

moving, with the tracking mechanism, the other pot upward to a location in proximity to the burners, where it is ready to be used as the next cooking pot, even as the pot 10 which has been used for cooking moves downward to be washed.